

CONFESSIONS OF A LOCKSMITH

An Insider's Guide to Securing
Your Home and Business



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Dedication

To the eradication of unwanted guests.

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Acknowledgments

Much appreciation goes to my long-time business partner, Brad Haber, both for the professional expertise and the patience he exhibited while I was putting this book together.

Thank you to the great staff of TopLock that makes my job so enjoyable. I would not be where I am today without the many “clients” that Brad, my staff and I have helped over the years.

My friends and my family give me life. To my wife Jo and my children, thank you for giving me a reason to get out of bed every day to do what I do so that this world can be a safer and a better place.

Getting Acquainted

I grew up in a small country town fifty kilometres north of Melbourne with my parents and older sister. I had a great life. My father was a police officer and my mum worked as a personal assistant at a printing firm. We had a small farm and I loved my life there.

The farm had all kinds of cool stuff on it and I had lots of “toys” to play with: machines and tools to take apart and put together. The farm was also a perfect place for me because I loved to get dirty and work with my hands. My mum could never decide whether to scold me or laugh at the silly things I did, but we all got along and I was a little adventuresome and a lot silly. Those were awesome times.

I left school at the age of fifteen and completed an apprenticeship in pastry cooking. When I turned twenty-one, after successfully completing my training, I travelled overseas, saw the world and worked at several different jobs. I then settled in England and lived there for three years where I met Jo, who I have now been happily married to for over sixteen years.

Jo and I left London and moved into a rented house in Northcote, Melbourne, Australia, in 1997. After we had been there for three months, we were robbed. I came home from work one day to find that someone had “jimmied” the sliding door at the back of the house. They had opened all the drawers in the house, pulled things out and flung them all over the place.

Our jewellery, cash, and CD player were all gone. I had thought we were secure because there were strong-looking locks on the front door. The maintenance guy who worked with the real estate agent that had found the house for us had installed them. Well, live and learn. Anyway, our insurance company pretty much took care of us, we got the door repaired and tried to put the ugly incident behind us. At least we hadn't been home and injured when the burglar had come calling.

But, really, I never got over it. Why hadn't our locks kept the

burglars away? Why had our home been chosen? Why had they robbed my house and not someone else's?

After living in Northcote for about a year, we moved to Ivanhoe. One night in Ivanhoe I locked myself out, which I had never done before. I rang my father who suggested I ask a locksmith for help, so that's exactly what I did.

About a half hour later, a locksmith arrived, pick gun in hand. He magically opened my front door in no time. I thought, *Wow, I'd love to do be able to do that*, and got to talking with the locksmith. He told me that if I wanted to learn to do what he did all I really needed to do was to go to night school. Imagine that.

Well, I did what he said, and that locksmith and I are friends to this day. I found out what he knew, but I wanted more. Thinking back to the time I had gotten robbed, I wanted to learn everything there was to know about how to be secure and I wanted to be able to help people feel secure in their homes and businesses. With the knowledge I had from my night schooling, I was ready to take the next step.

I enrolled in a class to obtain a Diploma of Security Technologies from Northern Melbourne Institute of Technology in Heidelberg, Victoria. It would take me two years to complete, as I had to work during the day. I spent two nights a week during those two years before I completed my apprenticeship, but this course was life changing.

I loved every minute of what I was doing. I was learning everything there was to know about locksmithing, protecting property, and the list goes on. I worked for several companies around Melbourne in the security industry. Now my eyes were really opened. You name it – if it was security, I did it. I got jobs in as many different types of locksmithing companies as I could, working in all different facets of the trade, honing my skills until I knew I could make a difference all by myself.

After three years learning, training and saving up, I was ready to step out on my own. I had five thousand dollars in my pocket, lots of knowledge and a name in my head. In 2002 I opened the doors of TopLock Locksmiths and I've never looked back. My mission statement was simple. It was to take my passion and enthusiasm for security and build a company that would not only implement my knowledge, but also impart it.

But, I needed a partner in crime, or perhaps I should say a partner to prevent crime, and that's where Brad Haber came in.

Brad's introduction to locksmithing began auspiciously in 1999 when he was fourteen-years-old. He attended school during the week and worked weekends as a tree lopper. While on the job, he came across a locksmith business owner and was fascinated. After one

particular hard day of work and another two hours of picking the brains and learning from that locksmith, he was unbelievably offered a trial job.

The rest, as they say, is history. Here's the short version. Four years later, the owner of that very locksmith shop sold it and Brad chose to move onto another company where he would get some managerial experience. In 2007 he ventured out on his own and ended up working in the same town where I was conducting business. We had our separate companies, but got together often, swapped shoptalk and, from time to time, a brew or two.

In 2008 Brad did some contract work for me. During that time, we found out, much to our mutual delight, that we came from the same country town. We enjoyed each other's company and had the same passion to keep people secure and to educate them about what we did. We both really wanted to make a difference in other people's lives. We decided to merge our companies and now have a staff of eight full-time employees.

We have the pleasure of working with hundreds of people a month, and are always on the lookout for more ways to serve our communities.

Brad and I have written this book because we believe that safety is important. We know that you have questions you are afraid to ask. We know that choosing someone to help with your personal safety is an important decision and it is our wish that you always feel secure, no matter where you are.

Justin Fankhauser, Brad Haber
April, 2013

Introduction

I know, many books begin with all kinds of information about “the author” and his or her accomplishments and information about the company or product they want you to know all about. This book will be a little bit the same, but for very good reason. We’re talking about security here – yours, that of your loved ones, and that of your business. It’s important. I am going to skip right to the important part.

Yes, our company is more than ten-years-old. So, we’re not newcomers. Yet, we’re young enough to be state-of-the art, to stay ahead of the curve. We remember what it’s like to have only one or two clients and we treat each of our customers as if he or she is our only customer. That’s important. Therefore, within these pages, consider that each bit of information has some detail to it so that you can make informed decisions when it comes to choosing what is right for protecting your home and your business.

Today, our company works to protect over 140 individuals or companies a week. At our company, TopLock, we’ve seen pretty much everything. We’ve installed security systems in homes and businesses across a variety of industries. We provide solutions that guarantee the best protection available. These solutions are customized and individualized. Keep that in mind when you’re trying to find the right company and the right products to serve your needs.

Also keep in mind that because of our experience we can help in situations where you need help that you don’t realise is necessary.

Are you a landlord? We suggest you employ a property rental manager to help you. Why? What if you’re unavailable when a tenant loses their keys? What if an eviction needs to take place and you are out of country? Do you know the rules about that, that there are very specific actions that must take place before you can evict a tenant? This may include eliciting assistance from a solicitor, and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal often must get involved. A

locksmith who offers to simply come and rekey a home after an alleged eviction who doesn't ask the right questions may not be able to do the right job for you. A property rental manager will know where to find help.

Finally, I'll pitch our website. Why? Because as thorough as I'll be in this book, security measures improve every day. Check out www.toplock.net.au. While you're there, read what our customers have to say about TopLock. Also, review our credentials. We are a member of the Master Locksmith's Association of Australia (MLA). Membership is restricted to those who pass a rigorous entrance examination. You do not want to work with a locksmith who is not affiliated with this organisation.

To end this introduction, we are going to tell you the two goals of this book. One is, obviously, to help you feel secure. The other is to teach you something about time. Time is something that you want to spend little of when it comes to keeping your home secure. It is also something that a burglar wants to spend little time doing.

Therefore, we suggest you go to YouTube channel [toplock23](#) and watch the informational videos there. They will show you things you can do quickly to make it tough for a burglar to break into your home. If a burglar thinks it will take a long time to rob your home, he or she will move onto the next house. That's a fact.

Now, here's a teaser tip for you (and there are more at the end of this book). Have a door viewer (also known as a peephole) installed in your front door. These are inexpensive and can make a big difference, especially when someone comes calling at night. Door viewers enable wide vision so you can check for loiterers who may be standing off to the side of your home.



Now that we're done with the preview, onto the meat of the book. It is designed to be reader-friendly, yet full of facts you probably don't know, but need to learn about.

Enjoy.



Doors

We'll talk about doors first because, well, obviously if a burglar can't get into your home they are doomed from the start. Doors or windows, it's much the same, but when most people think of "how do I get in?" they think of a door first.

The story I am about to tell you is a little heartbreaking. Yes, I work with people who have been robbed. Something about this one, though, just got to me.

A nice young couple had just bought their first home, and it was a fairly new house. They hadn't been there long when disaster struck. There had been a break in. When I saw what had happened, I almost couldn't believe my eyes. Someone had literally kicked their front door in half. The "kids" – as I referred to these young homeowners – were devastated, as you can imagine. What they saw when they came home from their hard day of work was half of a front door.

The doorframe was made out of solid wood; the lock and strike were fitted correctly – which was great. The lock and the doorframe hadn't budged. But, the door itself was quite another story. Upon inspection, it was found to have been made for internal use only, not external. There is quite a difference!

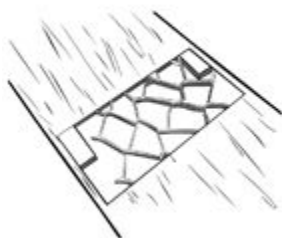
Solution

First, let's talk about that difference. External doors must be solid, not hollow. If you really think wood is so attractive that you just have to have a wood door, then go for it, but aluminium is a better, stronger choice. Whichever you choose, make sure it is solid. Forget about a glass front door. If you want glass for your patio or pool area, well, maybe. We'll talk about those later. But for your front door, no. Yes, I repeated that. Glass is just too fragile for that major entrance to your

home.

Once again, solid, not hollow. Why? Because hollow doors are lightweight, and though less expensive than solid doors, they are very easy to break.

Here are pictures of solid and hollow doors, hollow first. Imagine punching through one of these with your full weight behind it. Crack the front layer of this hollow door and you get right through it. Notice the honeycomb type pattern at its centre. This is a structural weakness.



It's much tougher to break a solid one, which looks like this:

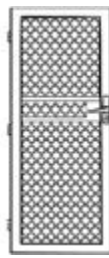


Likewise, the frame that holds your front door must be solid. Do not spare expense here. Saving a few dollars now could cost you more later. As a matter of law, some apartments and businesses must be fitted with solid fire doors. In some cases, there is also a requirement of a metal doorframe. Here, you're killing two birds with one stone. Solid door, solid frame. Perfect.

Security Doors

So far, we've been talking about standard doors, the kind that are most commonly found for the front of your home. There are, however, special doors that you can purchase, and we'll refer to these as security doors. They are often made of metal and may resemble what some refer to as a flyscreen door.

Here is what a security door looks like:

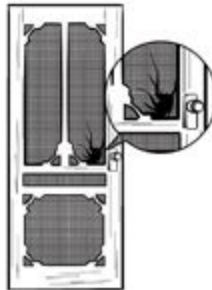


Here is what a fly screen door looks like:



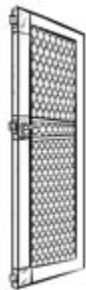
These do look a bit alike, and security doors are much more expensive than flyscreen doors. So, if they look so much alike, why wouldn't you get a flyscreen door? Because they're not safe. They're easy to penetrate. One quick tap on the screen and the difference can be felt and heard.

Here is an enlarged picture of the fly screen door. See the hole? Trust me, you cannot make a hole in the security door. It is made of metal that is too strong to make a hole in.



A security door, on the other hand – whether a standard door or a sliding door – is a great way of protecting your premises with an extra level of security. There are many different styles of security doors on the market. They can be made from aluminium or steel. However, if someone tries to sell you a security door made out of wood, walk away. This is a flyscreen door. Security doors are not made of wood.

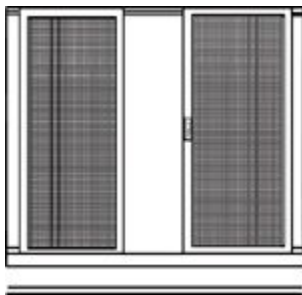
Not only can a security door be highly designed; it can also be locked. A security door that also has a lock will deter any would-be thief. Here's an example of a security door with a three-way lock. This one would take a while to break into.



Security doors are made with a variety of meshes. Some are one-way meshes, meaning that nobody can see in, but you can see out. Not only can you view anyone who is at your door, but you can install one, for instance, in your kitchen and have a great view of the terrace. These cost a bit extra, but provide incredible peace of mind.

If you really want to get that great outdoors feeling – and these are more appropriate for the backyard – you can even look into sliding doors. These are usually made of glass, and you will want to explore the type of glass, but there are safety doors that are sliding doors as well.

These can be deadlocked if needed, can be coated to protect the interior from UV rays and are now virtually shatter-proof. You will want to look for types that have a sturdy frame and that can take a proper, bolted lock. Stainless steel mesh is an option for a sliding door, as well.



Door Guards and Frames

Believe it or not, doorframes and doors can move. Weather conditions – such as heat or cold, dryness or humidity – are the determining factors. In general, they move up and swell when they get wet and move down and shrink when they get dry.

It is important that your doorframes are fitted properly to accommodate these changes. However, even if you have good doors and good locks, environmental factors can conspire to allow just enough room for a screwdriver to be slipped between a door and its lock, especially in severe climates.

Even without human interference, in an extreme case, you may be unable to securely close a door if the latch does not fit properly into the strike. You may think it's closed, but a burst of wind may be enough to force it open. That would indeed be the good fortune for a burglar who just happened to be passing through while you were away from home.



Deadlatches and Deadbolts

Did you know that most insurance companies now require that you put one of these on all doors and windows in order to receive full insurance coverage?

This is a deadlatch:



There is a difference between a deadlatch and a deadbolt. Simply stated, a deadlatch locks automatically when you close the door. You can insert a key in on either side of the door.

A deadbolt, on the other hand, must be locked using a key. It's great if you already have a knob set. This is a deadbolt:



All houses or businesses have some kind of lock on them, but many new or old styles of houses and businesses don't have the right locks for providing optimum security. Deadbolts and deadlatches can help here, but they have an added bonus. Let's say someone breaks in through a window. They're going to have real trouble escaping with anything of significant size if they can't exit through a door. A door with a deadlock or deadlatched door is much tougher to get through than one without.

A couple of warnings are in order, however, about the deadlock. First of all, don't leave the key in it when you leave. If you do, it will be much easier for someone to get out of your home or apartment. Also, some people deadbolt their houses at night to make themselves feel more secure. If you do this, leave the key in the lock, or nearby, but only when you are home. There was a case in Queensland where a family tragically lost their lives when their house caught fire because they couldn't get the door open – the keys to the deadbolt weren't near the door. So, be careful.

There are many different types of deadlatches on the market. When you open one from the outside, most are equipped to automatically "unlock" completely so that you do not lock yourself into your home. There are now digital and fingerprint locks that can be purchased for residences. An MLA locksmith can help you choose one. These might be fine solutions. Just make sure that every member of your household, and perhaps your solicitor and a VERY trusted friend, is given the ability to enter your home in case of emergency. Don't worry about emergency personnel. They are equipped with necessary override procedures.

Finally, realise that if you live in a rental property, you probably cannot have a deadbolt of any kind due to fire restrictions, but you can find out all the dos and don'ts from a qualified locksmith. Also, speak with your landlord or the governing body in your state to find about safety measures and ways to protect the valuables within your apartment.

Also, be aware that deadbolts are not permitted in most commercial buildings. You will need to contact local authorities about this, and you should reassess annually as regulations can change. Self-closing doors with levers that can be opened in a single downward motion may be required. This is mostly necessary to make it easy to exit a building in case of fire or other emergency.

However, CCTV, window grills, monitored alarms, lock blocker plates, and restricted keyways will help provide security in apartments and commercial buildings, and there are sections about these later in the book. In addition, technology changes rapidly, so keep up to date online. Enter the following into your search engine of choice: "new

locks”, “lock brands”, “MLA”, “accredited MLA”, and “master locksmith association of Australia” for additional information.

Patio Bolts

If you decide to install patio doors at any entrance to your home, you should also install bolts specifically made for this kind of door. The ones that come with the door and are pre-installed are referred to as flush bolts and are cut into the door itself. These are not as strong as surfaced style patio bolts, but are good as secondary locks. Proper patio bolts can also be retrofit into French doors and are an excellent addition to your overall security plan. Here is what one looks like:



Flush bolts are a little less obtrusive and modern looking than patio bolts. They can be used in a wider variety of doors, including patio doors to strengthen security. They can also be pre-installed into a door before it is hung.



Bi-Fold Doors

Bi-fold doors are currently quite popular. They are not typically found at the front of a home, so you might think that securing them is no big deal. This is not at all true. A sly burglar might view the back of the home as a great place to enter, sight unseen. To make matters worse, bi-fold doors are not solid; they have a fold in them. In other words, they have a natural weakness. While they tend to make the outside of

the home feel a little more like the inside, and in a way extend the home's living area, they can be very difficult to secure properly. Therefore, you need a good alarm system if you are going to use these.

Also, you should have them secured with patio bolts.



We've pretty much covered the most common types of door that you would want to use on your home or business. Of course, there are others – but most are for show, not for security. If you are considering something that you have not seen, be sure to consult with an accredited MLA locksmith before finalising your choice.

Windows

Okay, you've got your doors nice and secure. Nobody will break into your home now, right? Wrong. Case in point. I was called in to secure a home that had been broken into. When I arrived at the inner city residence, the homeowners were obviously upset. The house had been turned upside down. The burglars had gotten away with two plasma televisions, jewellery, cash, computers – just about everything valuable.

When I surveyed how the perpetrators had gained entry, I saw that the front door was wide open, yet it had not been smashed. It was quite obvious to me why this particular house had been targeted. Unlike neighbouring homes, it had no alarm installed, and no gates along its perimeter. The burglars had just walked down to the side of the house and smashed a window to get inside.

Yes, there were deadbolts installed on all the doors, but the keys had been left in the lock on the back of a side door. To compound the error, all the locks in the house could be opened with one key. Smart burglars – they took the key out of the side door and opened the deadbolt to the front door and walked right out of the house. No problem getting those large TVs out.

Solution

All windows in a house and business need to be locked. There are many different window styles, and each has a proper corresponding lock. Windows can be made of wood or aluminium. They can be sliding, sash or awning. Here are examples of what these look like with their preinstalled locks.

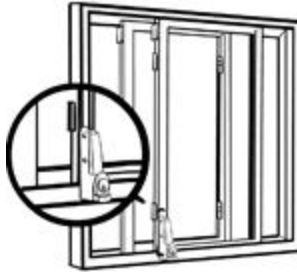
Awning window with proper lock:



Sash window with proper lock:



Sliding window with proper lock:



These preinstalled locks may not be sufficient. We recommend that a secondary lock be installed. Remember, windows are obviously a very easy point of entry for burglars because they are made of glass. Therefore, these must be key locked at all times.

In addition to locks, there are other measures you can take to secure your windows. Once you have secured proper locks, you are ready to look into these.

Window Grills and Shutters

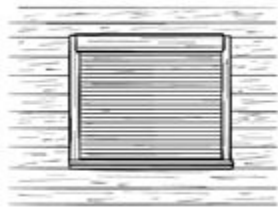
Window grills are becoming more and more popular for residential use. They have been present on commercial businesses for years, but they are now available in attractive designs that go way beyond the old standard square block tubing of yesteryear.

Grills are now handmade in modern and federation styles and designed in different colours and designs to suit any home or business. They no longer look like prison grates and provide a luxuriant touch of added security. Even if a burglar can break through a window, they won't be able to squeeze through a window grill to gain entry to your home or business.

Window grills can be mounted on the inside of the window frame or over the top of the window frame. They can be fixed to the exterior in a concealed manner, making them pretty much impossible to remove. In addition, they are usually secured with one-way screws or security fixings that very few have the tools to remove. A burglar would have to spend hours and make quite a mess to remove the grill. Between the noise and the amount of time it would take, he or she would get caught. Burglars know this, and any house equipped with a proper grill is one that a thief would avoid. Here's an example of a window grill:

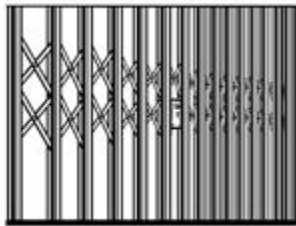


Window shutters are also an effective method of keeping burglars away. Some can be opened or closed via remote control; others are affixed to your home like grills are. Here's an example of a properly-installed home shutter.



Window shutters will be more visible from within the home, when closed, than window grills, but do the same job and are available in many designs and colours.

These commercial window shutters (below) would be more appropriate for a business or industrial setting:



Commercial window shutters are popular in business applications and can sometimes be retrofitted. This is especially beneficial for storefronts that are often susceptible to burglaries because consumers demand large expanses of glass so that they can see what a retailer has to offer.

Automated Protection

Access Control

Access control is a way of letting people into your home or business without going to the door itself. One of the earliest applications worked a bit like a two-way doorbell. You pressed a buzzer outside a building or room. Someone else heard the buzzer, pressed a buzzer on the inside of that building or room and now you could open the door. This was initially done via hard wiring. Access control has come a long way since then.

Now, it is often wireless. Computers can come into the picture, too. We recommend not relying on something like a computer – at least not unless you've got proper battery backup installed. After all, you do want to be able to take advantage of access control even in case of a power failure.

While access control was once viewed as futuristic or only for business applications, it is becoming increasingly popular in the home environment. It is now found in apartment blocks and can work in conjunction with magnetic and electric locks.

In addition to the system described above, homes – as well as businesses – can now use proximity cards, which are commonly called proxy cards.

This is a picture of a proxy card access.



You may be familiar with these in office applications or if you've been to a hotel recently. They work by giving the person who needs to gain entrance to an area a card that they swipe.

Notice that the picture above also has what is commonly referred to as a pin pad. The rows of numbers can also allow someone to gain access to an area. They simply enter in a code they have been provided.

The added benefit of these is that the cards, and the codes, can be personalised. You can actually "program" the access that the person holding the card – or given the pin code – has access to. This may be limited to just the entrance to a building, or include a specific room, storage facility or more "secure area." In addition, you don't have to rekey your entire building if a proxy card is lost or an employee (for whatever reason) is no longer working for your company.

Because you assign a code to each card, or to each employee, auxiliary staff members and subcontractors (such as cleaning personnel) can gain access to your home or business and you will know exactly where they are and when. This provides peace of mind. If for some reason an employee or contractor loses their card and it is picked up by someone else who uses it, you will know – presuming you are informed of the loss.

Technology for these key cards and pin pads is so advanced that you can even use them to open and close doors from remote locations. You can lock an employee out of a building at a second's notice. Just make sure that only you and perhaps one other trusted friend or co-worker or attorney has access to the master list of codes for access to all areas of your home or office, and keep a copy in a safe.

Intercoms

An intercom is much more than what you may think it is. At their inception, intercoms were little more than two-way walkie-talkies wired through walls.



Today, intercoms offer video as well as audio. They are used in home and business applications and give you the ability to see who is at your door. The modern intercom has an internal camera and can take a picture. It is not a CCTV, though, so it does not keep a record that is “backed up” to a computer or a hard drive.

Many intercom systems will only take a picture when a buzzer is pressed. The photo will include a time and date stamp. So, even if you are not present, you will be able to find out who tried to gain access to a property by pressing the button at the entrance. This is quite beneficial if you live or work in a building and are victim of a break-in, as sometimes someone else “innocently” lets a burglar in. That burglar undoubtedly pressed the buzzer, someone let them in, and there will be a record of it.

Alarms

Sometimes people are just unlucky. They’ve got proper locks on their doors and windows, but they’ve just forgotten to turn that key and they’ve left a door unlocked. Or a particularly crafty burglar has come calling. What can you do? You can have backup, and your backup might just save the day. What backup should you have? You should have an alarm. What will an alarm system do for you? It will help make sure that a burglar either doesn’t bother to step inside or that if he or she does, that he or she leaves quickly.

I’ve heard it all before: “Alarms are a waste of money.” Oh no they’re not. I’ve also heard, “Yeah, I have one, but it’s not hooked up. Why bother?” Here’s why.

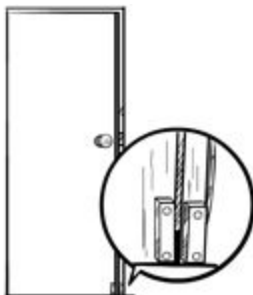
Think about this: if a burglar does happen to get into your home or business, do you want him or her to be inside for a few minutes or a few hours? I’d prefer not at all, but I’d prefer seconds or minutes to hours.

Astonishing though it may seem, there have been instances where burglars have sat down, turned on the telly, helped themselves to some food and made themselves at home.

How can you prevent this? By installing an alarm system, making

sure it is armed, loud, and hooked up to emergency services. The noise alone may drive the thieves away.

There are many different styles of alarms on the market. Some are hardwired; others are wireless. Some use alarm reed switches that activate when you open a door or window. Here's what a reed switch looks like



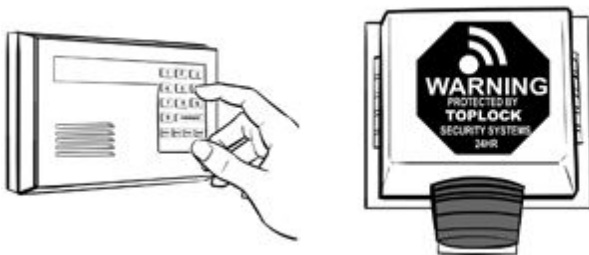
Panic switches can also be installed – the most popular place for these being the bedroom of a house.

Don't be afraid to show people you have an alarm. Place stickers on windows and doors – as well as on front and back gates – of your home and business. Remember, the goal is to make your home unattractive for a burglar. Friends or family members won't think any less of you for it.

Finally, alarms provide the ultimate in peace of mind. You can receive phone, text and/or email messages to verify your property is secure when you are away, and to alert you to any possible threats.

All alarms come as part of a monitoring package. This means that if the alarm system is breached, emergency personnel will automatically respond. First, a call will be made to your home or business. Even if you answer, you will be required to give a code to confirm all is well. If you do not give the right code, emergency workers will come to the scene. Procedures for what to do if you are under attack are thoroughly reviewed when your alarm system is installed.

If you are not at home or in the office, or do not answer the phone, emergency workers are sent to the property immediately. Your home or business will be checked for intruders. You will receive a report. The cost for this monitoring begins at about a dollar a day, and is highly recommended. It is often also monitored by a security centre. On the left is what a typical alarm looks like. When you enter your home, you enter a code to tell the "system" that it's you entering. At the right is an example of a sticker you might place where it can be easily seen identifying your home as one that is protected by proper security.



Up until now, we've been talking about alarms that go off when a door or window has been opened. In addition, there are alarms that can detect movement. This is done by adding motion sensors in various places throughout the home. These days you can even get pet friendly alarms that won't activate when a cat or dog is walking around. These are generally not recommended for large-breed dogs.



Most alarm systems include both door/window alarms and motion sensors. Talk to your accredited MLA locksmith about putting together an alarm system tailored to your specific needs.

CCTV

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) is a very popular and cost-effective way of adding security to your home. Years ago it was only for the rich and famous, but today it is an affordable alternative that is available to the public.



Yes, someone can put a mask over their face before they set out to rob you, but if a thief sees just one CCTV near your front door they'll be

wondering how many others there are. In other words, CCTVs are a great deterrent. Besides, there's more to a thief than a face. Of course, CCTVs also have the advantage that you can play back an incident to your heart's content. Footage of an incident can be given to forensic experts. There's almost always some identifiable aspect of a thief that will enable them to be caught, face obscured or not. Additionally, details such as a view of the burglar's car parked in view of your CCTV may literally help catch a thief.

CCTVs have other benefits as well. Let's say you are a business owner and you've got a CCTV at the entrance to your office. A thief might just duck and think, okay, in I go. But, CCTVs come in all shapes and sizes. You can put them anywhere. There is no way anybody can see all of them. A professional can install them so that even if a break-in does occur, the odds of catching the perpetrator can be greatly increased.

You can also purchase CCTVs that film on the infrared spectrum, effectively spoiling night-time theft. Burglars are aware of this. Of course, watching as objects are removed will help when it comes time to deal with your insurance company. All in all, investing in CCTVs is an investment that will pay for itself. Speaking of insurance, many companies will offer you a discount if you have CCTVs installed.

On a more personal note, you can keep an eye on your little ones via CCTV to make sure they're not getting into trouble. Let's say you're making supper and your one-year-old is playing in his or her room. You can keep one eye on your child from across the house, and that eye can be big because CCTV footage can be displayed on any size monitor, and even on your TV. You can also keep track on your phone or pretty much any mobile device.

Rekeying

A few years ago, a good friend of mine was robbed. Yes, another robber story, but hey, that's what happens in the security business. He lived in a double-storey townhouse that was not too far from where I lived at the time. He was quite upset when he rang me and really needed to have his door secured straight away. He also needed the house rekeyed because his key ring had been stolen. This might have been the most valuable thing the thieves had made away with because the burglar now had unlimited access to his car and his home.

I drove as quickly as I could and arrived at my friend's home to find out that all the cash, jewellery and items that even insurance cannot replace were all gone. Papers, silver, coins, everything – the place had been picked clean. To be honest, my friend's home had been an easy target. The back door had been easily jimmied. None of the doors had bolts and there was no alarm system.

I got the badly damaged front door fixed up well enough that it could be bolted and spent a while rekeying the entire house. I asked if the car keys or remote were missing and though he assured me they were not, he did confess that his spare set of house keys were gone. He kept them in a bowl in the kitchen! I held my breath, counted to ten and as calmly as I could told him in no uncertain terms that spare keys belong in a safe. A safe with a combination lock.

Shaking my head and mumbling a bit under my breath, I secured the home as best I could, rekeyed the locks and left him in the hands of the police. He was giving them his report and waiting for the insurance company to call as I walked out the door.

The next morning I got a phone call from my very same mate. Breathless, he began, "You're not going to believe it. Around 2.00 am while fast asleep," (his bedroom is on the second floor at the rear of the house), "I heard the roller door go up. I got to the blinds and opened them and saw someone opening my car door and jump in." He

finished the story, saying that before he could get downstairs to his car it was gone. Apparently, the previous day, the thieves had stolen the garage remote control and a spare set of car keys and he had not noticed, even though I had asked when he had confessed about the house keys.

But, there is a happy ending. My mate rang the police straight away to tell them what had happened and the burglar was caught driving my mate's car early that same morning. They followed the not-smart-enough-burglar back to his house to find all my mate's belongings, as well as lots of other stolen goods. Apparently, the thief had just been released from prison for similar crimes and seemed set on going right back in.

I certainly learned my lesson. When working with the victim of a burglary, give them what they need for future protection, not what they think they need. Check and recheck, no matter how annoyed the person you're helping gets. Overprotect. That's a good lesson for you, too. More is sometimes more!

When to Rekey

After a burglary has taken place is probably the nastiest time to rekey because it means you've been robbed. It's also good to rekey if you've lost a set of keys, or even if you think you've lost them. We all misplace things. But if it's keys and you're not sure, better to be safe than sorry. Or let's say a new worker has been to your house. Or perhaps a good friend is all of a sudden not a friend anymore. Take a look around. If it's a key and you can't find it, get rekeyed. As they say, an ounce of prevention!

Here's another time to rekey your locks: when you move into a new home, whether you've bought or rented. People overlook this. Even if you're purchasing a brand new home, or you're the first renters in a newly-built apartment complex, someone has entered the premises before you. This may be the builder, an electrician, plumber, carpenter, etc. Yes, the builder (etc.) is probably reputable. But where has this person's key ring been? Set down at a restaurant? Left in an unlocked car? You never know. So, the minute you sign on the dotted line, rekey everything. Rekeying is much less expensive than changing all the locks.

When people think about rekeying, they think about front door locks. Rekeying applies to windows and roller doors (such as garage doors). It also applies to things like remote controls. Finally, the term applies to car keys, and to key cards. If you want to take it to an extreme, a key is a physical code. You change your computer codes,

don't you? If not, you should. Do the same for your home, your business and your car. It is better to do it more often than less. Keys and cards are not expensive. What's inside of what they grant access to is.

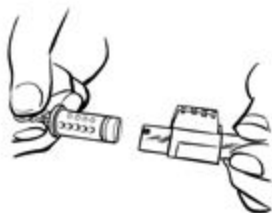
In terms of business applications, you may be concerned that rekeying all the time is a hassle and you may lose track of all the different employees with different keys. There is a way of minimising rekeying every time a staff member leaves. To do this, put all the locks on a restricted keyway.

This helps in four ways. First, restricted keys can only be cut by the locksmith who has put the restricted system in place. No other locksmith can cut keys for the system or rekey the locks.

Second, when you implement a restricted keyway system you must, then and there, decide on signatories. The signatory is you and whomever else you designate to authorize to cut a new key. You sign at the time the system is set up. This stops staff or non-authorized people from getting keys cut. No matching signature, no key.

The third benefit of a restricted keyway is how it is put together. It's a very tight lock that is hard to pick. Also, it is almost impossible for anyone other than the person who created it to gain entry without a key. For the curious, here's how taking one of these locks apart and rekeying it is done.

Here's the first part of the procedure, where your locksmith physically pulls the lock apart. The little bumps on the left hand side of the picture are pins and your locksmith replaces these to create a new key combination. In order to do this, he uses a new physical key.



After the pins are realigned, the barrel is put back into the lock. Your locksmith tests the key that he used to realign the pins, and now you have a newly keyed lock and corresponding key.



The fourth benefit of restricted keying is fairly straightforward. With a restricted key system you can create a master key that allows access throughout a home or building and have other keys created that only allow entry to specific rooms or areas. Replacement keys are very expensive, so this may not be an ideal solution for commercial environments with high turnover rates. However, if a system that relies on electricity or battery backup is not appropriate, this is a great alternative.

Cars

If you have had a break in and your spare set of house keys has been stolen, it's most likely that your car keys have also been stolen. Of course, it's best not to leave an extra car key where it can be found, but if you have, all is not lost. Your car can be rekeyed, just as your home and office can.

The way that a locksmith will go about rekeying your car is somewhat dependent on the age of your car. If your car was made before 2000 your locksmith will rekey the lock and the key much as he would your front door.

Presuming your car was made after 2000, there's a transponder chip within the head of the key.



If that chip is not present, the car will not start. A locksmith who is a member of the MLA will have access to the correct code to program onto a new transponder chip so that your car will now start. Once this is done, all the car locks (door, trunk, glove box if applicable) will be rekeyed and you will be given a key that will work in them.

Long gone are the days when you can just walk in and have a car key duplicated. Though you may think the process of having to go to a special locksmith to get your car rekeyed is a hassle, it is for your protection. I cannot tell you how many times I've seen burglars rob a home and drive away with the goods, in the homeowner's car!

An Even Dozen

Over the past seven years as certified MLA locksmiths, Brad and I have seen just about everything in terms of domestic and commercial theft. We have studied how people break in, why they break in, how they are caught and how the police deal with perpetrators. We are familiar with all the statistics of where robberies occur, when they occur, and what can be done to decrease the chances of you being a victim.

Wear Your Pyjamas

Before I give you tips that I have found effective in procuring peace of mind, I will give you one amusing piece of advice: if you sleep alone, wear pyjamas. Why?

Late one Saturday/early Sunday morning on a very hot summer night, I received a distress call from a man. He was calling from a phone booth in Fitzroy, Melbourne, Australia. He was calling from a police station!

This man, who I will refer to as Steven, told me he had locked himself out of his apartment and that he needed me to help him get back in. So far so good. I told him what I charged. It was the middle of the night, and I charge a lot for that. “No problem, mate,” came the answer, “but can you come straight away?”

This was fine with me, but then came the rest of the story. “I want to tell you what I’m wearing.” Hmm, well, my caller ID said he was indeed calling from a police station, so I thought this a bit bizarre, but okay. “I’m in a police forensic suit, the kind you have to wear when you have murdered someone.” I almost hung up, but he continued quickly, “I’ll explain when you get here.”

Well, okay, I guess he’s not a pervert or a mass murderer or anything because the police are obviously letting him go, I thought. This was a bit

strange, but maybe it would sort itself out. "I'll come and get you, but you will need ID and full payment as soon as I let you into your house."

I jumped into my van, and on arrival, Steven met me near the front of the police station. He was not handcuffed, but he did indeed have nothing on except that pre-announced forensic suit. I introduced myself to him and found him to be quite nice. He was sober, and quite apologetic about getting me out of bed at such an ungodly hour. I proceeded to ask him what had happened.

He explained to me that in the last couple of weeks, his work and private life had become very hectic, and that for the first time of his life he was starting to sleepwalk, finding himself waking up in various rooms of his apartment at all hours of the night.

But this night it had gone too far. Being a very hot night, he had decided to forego the pyjamas before crawling into bed. All he could remember was waking up exiting the ground car park into the laneway naked. His apartment building had doors that self-lock so he was stranded with no keys, no ID, no money. He had just himself – literally.

Fortunately, though, he had his wits and found a phone booth that he knew was not too far away. He dialled 000 emergency, explained to the person on the other end of the phone what had happened and the police came and got him. They verified his identity, and told him he'd have to call someone to come and get him.

He had a better idea. How about if the police broke into his house for him? They had a good laugh at that one. Steve was embarrassed enough already, and they could see that. They explained that they couldn't do that, but they let him use their phone to find a locksmith who would get him into his home. He called a few, but I was the only one who answered the phone.

The rest, as they say is history. From time to time I run into Steve and we have a good chuckle. I always tell him that his story is the legend of the locksmith world. Me, I've learned, I always make sure a friend has a key to my home just in case ...

Okay, onto some tips that even pyjama wearers can use.

Tip 1

Sneak Attack

Sneakers by the door. Yep, you read that right. I employed this old trick years ago at a residential property I had recently purchased.

This was a brand new house that I had bought from the builder. It showed; many of the homes on the street were unoccupied. So, as soon as the deal was done and the papers signed, I drove right over and put a pair of sneakers right at the front door.



Believe it or not the next day my real estate agent rang me at 7.00 am. “Are you in your new house?” he asked.

“No, I’m not.”

“Well,” he said in a panic, “there’s a pair of sneakers at the front door. Someone’s in there! Should I ring the police?”

PS – for best effect, use running shoes that are well worn in and a bit scruffy.

Tip 2

The Sound of Safety

Buy an inexpensive radio and turn it on when you are going out. Better yet, put it on a timer, so it comes on at various times during the day. Radios don't use too much power and when they are on, they make it sound as if someone is at home.



Why does this work? It has to do with the weakest link theory. Burglars rob a home that is the weakest link. Weak link homes and businesses are ones with inferior security and those that do not seem to be lived in. The sound of music playing really makes it seem as though someone is at home. It's a small measure that can make a big difference.

Tip 3

Curb Your Thief

All homeowners are proud of their homes. We all talk about curb appeal. How proud we are to drive up to our home when they have big bushy trees and colourful shrubs up front and centre.

The problem is that those big trees and shrubs are perfect hiding places for burglars. Tall trees are ladders that thieves can use to climb into a second-storey window. Keep tall trees and fat bushes far from your home.

Do you like tall fences? You may think they keep people out, but what they also do is hide people once they are inside. If it must be a tall fence, make it an iron one that people can see through. The rungs should be spaced closely so that a person can't fit through.

So, if it's solid, keep it away from your house!



Tip 4

From Lawn to Garage

Most burglars don't walk around with a jimmy bar in their pocket. Some carry a few handy tools with them, but most times they will use something they find lying around the yard to help them break into a home.

Garden tools are used for smashing windows; ladders help thieves get to those windows on the second floor at the back of the house. Long-handled shovels with steel heads are particularly useful. Keep these and similar items locked up tight inside a shed. Don't scrimp on the locks of your shed.



Better yet, keep tools in your garage. You think that's inconvenient? Think about this: what's more inconvenient? Having to walk to your garage to pull out your garden shears, or having to deal with losing your valuables and feeling insecure because you're been burgled?

Tip 5

No Sensory Deprivation

Think about it. Are you more likely to do a nasty deed if someone can see you or if they can't? I'll answer that one for you. Nobody wants to be caught being naughty. That even applies to burglars.

Sensor lights are not expensive. These days, they can be mounted easily and run on batteries. Put them outside in all the nooks and crannies. Buy the kind that light up any time there is motion. You don't even have to hardwire them. Low maintenance, easy to install.

No burglar wants to risk getting caught. The second that light shines, a thief, like a rat, will go scurrying. Put these up at the front and the back of your property.

An alternative is a timer light. These give the illusion that someone is inside the premises and can be set to come on and off at different times every night. A few of each kind, strategically placed, will provide an effective deterrent against night-time prowlers.



Tip 6

No Chains, Thank You

Hardware stores sell a lot of chains. We're talking about the ones you put on your doorframes. They break easily. You open the door a crack, and immediately someone can stick their foot in; apply a bit of force and crack, the chain busts and a burglar, thief, your nasty ex, or whomever, is standing right next to you.



But that's not the main reason why we're not a big fan of these. Many who buy them think it means their home is secure. It's not. Things worse than feet can fit through a door opened even if the chain holds. These include a gun and a knife. Want to see who's on the other side of your door? Install a peephole. If that's not allowed? Just talk to the person. If you don't recognize their voice, for sure, don't open the door. No chain, no pain. That's our answer and we're sticking to it.

Tip 7

Stick It To 'Em

Yes, keep that radio playing from time to time when you're out and about. Get a CCTV. The fact remains: no matter how much you spend on security, thieves will always wonder, *Is it real, or is it Memorex?* (as the saying goes).

One thing is for sure. It's kind of tough to buy something that looks like this:



Maybe a friendly security company will give you such a sign – even if you're not “signed up” – but, probably not. So, if you've got it, flaunt it. Place stickers announcing that you've got security protecting you and place them as close to your front door and windows as you can. Think they're ugly? I'd rather a little ugly than a lot broken into.

Tip 8

Keep It Safe

It is absolutely amazing, but believe it or not thousands of people leave keys, jewellery, cash, their legal documents, discs with data lying in plain view all around the house. These items belong in a safe.

Safes come in all shapes and sizes. They can be wall-mounted or free standing and can be adapted for any application within your house or business.

There are three styles of safes: plate, steel fire safes and data.



Safes are opened by either a key lock or a combination. The combination can be manual or digital.

A plate safe is mainly used to store cash as these are hardest to break into. However, these are not fireproof, so if your house burns, your cash will go up in smoke.

A fire safe is steel on the outside but has an interior anti-fire coating. Contents placed within it will not burn for two hours. Cash, passports, important documents, jewellery, and keys are typically kept in this type of safe.

A data safe is quite similar to a fire safe and is typically used inside a business to protect important data.

What all these safes have in common is that they are heavy. They can even be bolted into cement. The fact that they are also locked makes it difficult for a burglar to get into what's inside. So, if it's

valuable, and you want to keep it safe, buy a safe. It's your best choice.

Tip 9

Pack It Up

We see it all the time, and so do you. It's just that you're not a burglar (we hope), so you don't pay attention. But thieves do. You buy a high-ticket item like a TV. You unpack it, install it and you're in hog heaven.

A few days later your house is robbed. Wonder why? You left a nice big sign in front of your house. "We're rich. We bought a brand new TV." In burglar-speak that's, "We're careless, take it away."

Keep those boxes inside your garage. Wait until the morning your garbage or paper goods are being picked up. Better yet, break those boxes into small pieces before you dispose of them.

This goes double when you move into a new home. Don't put all those boxes out on the street at once. That's a sign that there are lots more packed boxes inside the home. They are all already packed. They're probably labelled "master bedroom," (that means jewellery). Or "kitchen" (that means silverware). Pack and unpack smart.



Tip 10

Stick It to It

This one is an oldie but a goodie. Almost every home has some sort of sliding door or window. If you've gotten this far, you probably know that this door or window should have a proper lock.

Be that as it may, a lock can sometimes be picked, or it can get old and loosen easily. Add extra protection. Place a stick of wood in the track where the door or window slides back and forth. Don't use a dowel. Many people try using a dowel rather than a piece of wood because dowels may be easier to find.

The reason for using a stick of wood is its shape. It is not round; a dowel is. Therefore, a dowel can roll, or be easily pushed out of the track.

A square piece of wood cut so that it fits snugly will make a door or window tough to jimmy open. Here's what one looks like when it is properly placed in a window track.



Tip 11

Foolish Travels

When you're away from home you should not leave your house empty. Why? If I have to tell you, well ... start reading the introduction to this book, and when you get back to this page maybe you'll know why.



So it's very worthwhile to have someone stay in your house if you intend to travel for any length of time. If you don't know of anyone, go searching the internet for accredited house exchange organisations like *Couchsurfing*.

If you're not into having someone stay in your house, at least do the following when you're out of town. Have someone pick up your mail. Put your lights and TV on timers. Have someone put garbage in front of your house on the day the garbage man comes (even if it's their garbage). Make your house looked lived in, even when it's not.

Tip 12

Peace of Mind

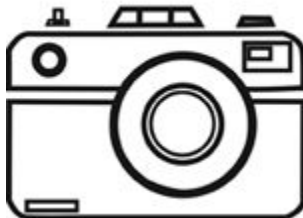
These tips aren't going to prevent you from being burgled, and maybe you've heard some of them before. We hope that coming from professionals, you'll pay attention to them!

We've put this last because the intention of this book is to keep you and your possessions safe. Sometimes, however, there is just nothing you can do. You are out of town, that uninvited guest comes calling and you arrive home to find that your home has been burgled.

If you have done the three things listed here, the rocky road ahead will be just a bit smoother. Yes, we'll need to come out and rekey your home and your car. You'll have a few other things to sort out. But, you'll have a head start on getting back to life as usual.

ONE: Identify your belongings, both at home and at work. There are marker pens specifically designed for this. They are infrared. If your items are found by police, searched for at pawnshops, etc., one swipe with a proper light and they are proven to be yours.

TWO: About every six months, just go around your home and take pictures. Do so from various angles so you get photos of all the furniture, the items on the walls, the carpets, the cars. Open any cabinets that have expensive items in them. Use a video camera and verbally identify the items if you prefer. Keep pictures or discs in a proper safe or deposit box at the bank. In case of mishap you can prove what was taken. Your insurance company will love you. Also, take a picture whenever you buy something expensive.



THREE: Insurance. If you can't afford to replace it but you must have it, insure it. Keep receipts.

Peace of mind is priceless.

Confessions of a Locksmith 2

The Top Ten stories from our locksmiths

We hope you've enjoyed this book. We'd love to hear what you think of it and for you to find us on Facebook where you can upload a photo of yourself reading it.

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